Genesis 7:12

וַֽיְהִ֥י הַגֶּ֖שֶׁם עַל־הָאָ֑רֶץ אַרְבָּעִ֣ים י֔וֹם וְאַרְבָּעִ֖ים לָֽיְלָה׃

The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

What is the significance of 40?

After the number seven, 40 is the most frequently seen number in the Tanach. In ancient texts 40 indicates a period of transition or transformation, profound internal change, a new beginning. The number also seems to manifest across cultures and traditions:

* Moses fasts for 40 days at Sinai.
* Jesus fasts for 40 days in the wilderness.
* The Quran was revealed to Muhammed when he was 40
* Siddhārtha Gautama sits under the bodhi tree for 40 days in meditation
* Shams teaches Rumi for 40 days in seclusion

QUESTIONS

1. Where else does ‘40’ appear in Torah/TaNaKh?
2. What do you think is the origin-source for 40 as a significant time reference?
3. What would a Jewish ritual-of-40 look like, and when would it be observed?